

2010 Washington County HCP Scope of Work

Project Title: Systematic Clearances of Remaining Incidental Take Properties
Adjacent to the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve

Cost: \$25,000 to UDWR for systematic clearances of take parcels and \$20,700 administered by Washington County for reserve fencing. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$45,700 per year for three years within Zones 2, 3, and 5 (See Table 1 and 2). Fencing will be completed in Zones 4 and Zone 6 (White Reef area) in years 4 and 5.

Lead Agencies:

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Washington County HCP Administration, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Prepared By:

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Relationship to Recovery Program:

The project assists in the recovery of the Desert Tortoise (Mojave population) by moving tortoises out of harm's way (prior to development), translocating displaced tortoises (when appropriate) into Red Cliffs Desert Reserve (Management Zone 4), and protecting desert tortoises within the Reserve by completing Reserve boundary fencing gaps (e.g.,

reducing loss of tortoises off of the Reserve, protecting tortoises from exposure to disease).

Project Background Information:

This process would accomplish multiple objectives: 1) Complete Reserve boundary fencing on priority areas in Zones 2,3, and 5, thus increasing protection by reducing the loss of tortoises, 2) Maximize the number of tortoises removed during the clearance process (under the current process, many tortoises are displaced prior to conducting requested clearances), 3) Increase landowner satisfaction by removing delays associated with conducting clearances during designated windows (currently if landowners and developers request clearances outside of windows they may have to wait up three to five months for a clearance and subsequent release), and 4) Prevent ‘uncoordinated’ development of take areas in the future.

Currently, the process to move tortoises out of harm’s way on incidental take areas is often cumbersome. Landowners initially contact Washington County, who then must clear the property of desert tortoises within the spring (March 15 to May 15) or fall clearance (August 20 to October 20) windows. If the County is unable to clear the property within the designated clearance windows then the project could be delayed until the following clearance window. If the property is not appropriately cleared prior to development, the landowner and the County could be liable.

Goals and Objectives:

The goal of the project is to change the current process and conduct systematic clearances on the remaining take areas over the next three years. This would better serve landowner interests by avoiding delays in requested clearances and maximizing our ability to remove tortoises from harm’s way. In addition, it would complete fencing around the perimeter of the Reserve, thereby protecting the Reserve tortoise population. Systematic clearances would better serve the HCP, landowners, and tortoise recovery and resolve other outstanding issues (non-coordinated developments) with the incidental take process.

Methods (Task Description) and Approach:

We have broken down the process into two major tasks which include:

Task 1. Prioritize clearances of the remaining take areas. Annual clearance priorities will be determined by the technical committee and HCAC. Clearances will be prioritized to accommodate land owners and maximize tortoise encounters. Clearance methods will follow the current approved protocols in place for Washington County. Hire a qualified crew to systematically conduct clearances (presence/absence and removals as necessary) during upcoming clearances windows. Upon completion of tortoise removal surveys, take areas will be eligible for permanent release after landowner/developer provides Washington County Form A. Under this process, specific take parcels would still be released only directly prior to development. Hence, systematic clearances would cover

Forms A, B, and C under the current process, but Form D (landowner release) would be issued immediately prior to development.

Task 2. Identify current gaps in Reserve fencing. Complete tortoise fencing to fill gaps in Reserve boundary. In this proposal, we have prioritized completion of fencing in Zones 2, 3, and 5 (Table 2). Fencing to complete these areas is estimated at approximately \$20,700 per year for three years based on \$2.70/ft for 4-strand range fence (\$8.86/m) and \$2.30/ft for tortoise mesh (\$7.54/m). Reserve fencing will be completed in conjunction with tortoise clearances and release of adjacent take areas. (We will focus on gaps associated with take parcels however additional gaps in Reserve fencing will need to be completed outside of this proposal.) Fencing in Zones 4 and 6 will be proposed in Years 4 and 5.

Recommendation/Results:

This process would accomplish multiple objectives: 1) Complete Reserve boundary fencing on priority areas in Zones 2,3, and 5, thus increasing protection by reducing the loss of tortoises, 2) Maximize the number of tortoises removed during the clearance process (under the current process, many tortoises are displaced prior to conducting requested clearances), 3) Increase landowner satisfaction by removing delays associated with conducting clearances during designated windows (currently if landowners and developers request clearances outside of windows they may have to wait up three to five months for a clearance and subsequent release), and 4) Prevent ‘uncoordinated’ development of take areas in the future.

Budget Summary for Calendar Year 2010:

Tasks:	Cost
Complete tortoise fencing	\$20,700
Conduct clearances	\$25,000
Total:	\$45,700

Total:

The project is estimated to cost \$45,700 per year for three years. Fencing will be completed in Zones 4 and Zone 6 (White Reef area) in years 4 and 5. See Table 1 for breakdown of tasks by year.

Table 1. Estimated costs by year of project.

	Year 1 Year 2009	Year 2 Year 2010	Year 3 Year 2011	Year 4 Year 2012	Year 5 Year 2013
Task 1	\$25,000 Zones 2, 3, & 5	\$25,000 Zones 2, 3, & 5	\$25,000 Zones 2, 3, & 5	\$7,000 Zones 4 & 6	\$7,000 Zones 4 & 6
Task 2	\$20,700 Zones 2, 3,& 5	\$20,700 Zones 2, 3,& 5	\$20,700 Zones 2, 3,& 5	\$90,200 Zones 4 & 6	\$90,200 Zones 4 & 6
Total	\$45,700	\$45,700	\$45,700	\$97,200	\$97,200

Table 2. Location of Reserve boundary fencing gaps, estimated distance (km) and relevant notes, Washington County, Utah.

ZONE	LOCATION	DISTANCE (km)	NOTES	ESTIMATED COSTS ¹
2	Red Mountain area	1.000		
	Sand Wash – The Cliffs	0.132		\$26,699
	Castle Rock to Paradise Canyon	0.114		
3	East of Bluff street	0.244	Near St. George shooting range; Red Hill Parkway/SR18 interchange project will fence some of this gap	
	Winchester Hills - west	0.500		\$19,155
	Industrial Wash area	0.174		
	Turkey Farm Rd - west	0.285	Missing tortoise mesh	
	Turkey Farm Rd- east	0.806	Missing tortoise mesh	
	Middleton Wash	0.750		
	Grapevine	0.690		
4	Hurricane Gravel Pit/Grandpa's Pond	1.0	Lost of tortoise sign adjacent to SW Reserve boundary	\$164,000
	Zone 4 boundary - West	2.0		
	Zone 4 boundary - North	5.0		
	Zone 4 boundary - East	2.5		
5	West Hurricane Cinder Knolls	0.5	Important to separate diseased tortoises (in Gould's Wash) out of Reserve	
	Hurricane Cinder Knolls, north	1.0	No range fence; Currently only tortoise mesh; Tortoise mesh has been compromised (flattened) many times	\$17,060
	White Reef - East boundary	1.0		\$16,400
Estimated cost based on \$16.40/m range fence (4 strand) and tortoise mesh (1" x 2" hardware cloth).				